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John H. McDowell

PARADISE FORESTALLED: ANIMAL SUITORS IN SIBUNDOY MYTH

In this essay I hope to establish the existence of an implicit moral philosophy in the mythic narratives of the indigenous communities resident in Colombia's Sibundoy Valley, and I will suggest a connection between this mode of thought and the historical circumstances of its production. I refer to a powerful conceptual paradigm that we can call *paradise forestalled*, a mythic reverie that contemplates the founding of an earthly paradise but draws away from this enticing prospect due to the hidden costs it contains. This moral philosophy remains implicit because it is not explicitly asserted as an overt proposition. But the weight of the evidence, from mythic narratives and commentaries on them as well as from supporting ethnographic and ethnohistorical documentation, points to the centrality of this pattern of thought in traditional Sibundoy cosmology. In advancing this line of interpretation, I first echo the voice of Sibundoy elders, by knotting the threads of several traditional discourses, and then amplify this role, by inserting these threads into the fabric of regional history.

The Sibundoy Valley, an emerald oval at the eastern periphery of the Andes cordillera, is the ancestral home of two indigenous communities, the Kamsá, speaking the last living dialect of the Quillasinga language, and the Ingas, speaking the northernmost dialect of Quechua. It has been my privilege, on visits to the valley spanning some thirty years now, to gather from the lips of Sibundoy storytellers a rich harvest of narratives depicting the actions and accomplishments of their ancestors, known in Inga as *ñujpamandakuna*, the people of the first days (McDowell 1989, 1994). Here I address interpretive problems associated with a cluster of motifs in this South American Indian mythology. I will develop the argument that this group of closely related myths, when placed within the larger framework of Sibundoy cosmology, is plausibly constructed as a meditation on the theme of paradise forestalled. Further, I propose that this interpretation articulates in interesting ways with the historical predicament of the Sibundoy indigenous communities as *indios civilizados*, "civilized Indians." My argument highlights significant relationships between myth, cosmology, and history, and registers the impact of transformative events on representations of collective identity.

The mythology of native communities in Colombia's Sibundoy Valley evinces a persistent curiosity—call it an obsession—with regards to a clutch of related episodes centered on attempts by uncouth spirits, in the form of animal-people, to gain a foothold in the family of man. To be sure, Sibundoy mythmakers have no monopoly on this theme, for the mythologies of the world abound with spirits, suspended between the animal and human, on the prowl, seeking and obtaining human mates. Nor is it the case that Sibundoy narrators are confined to permutations of this particular theme, for the Sibundoy mythscape is replete with the many wonders of the mythical imagination. But I would suggest that Sibundoy narrators, at least in the present moment, specialize in this branch

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of mythological thought. In a corpus I recorded from several Kamsá storytellers, the plots of some ten of thirty-two mythic narratives depict these ambitious spirits seeking entrance to the human community (McDowell 1994). In a smaller corpus I gathered from Inga storytellers, not yet published as a collection, there are several examples of this theme as well. The incessant approach and rejection of these animal-people in Sibundoy mythic narratives suggests the outlines of a major cosmological system that I will examine in some detail here, for I believe it encodes a moral philosophy lying at the heart of the Sibundoy ethos.

The body of narrative exhibiting the theme under inspection is quite diverse in its contents, and the notion of paradise forestalled is not the first or most obvious elucidation of its meaning. The typical case involves some spirit in the form of an animal-person who comes courting at the home of a young man or woman and enters into a temporary conjugal relationship of the sort ethnologists of the Andes term "trial marriage." These spirits take various animal forms, always drawn from the realm of the wild rather than the domestic, and always conserving in their appearance and in their behavior, as portrayed in the stories, vivid reminders of their bestiality even as they take human form, converse with humans, and share human appetites. The paradigmatic case proceeds as follows: the animal-person suitor arrives, secures the affection of his or her intended mate, and initially makes some progress towards gaining the acceptance of the family. In these details, the stories replicate customs associated with the actual practice of trial marriage in these communities. But somewhere along the way something goes wrong: the suitor is just too uncouth in its habits or looks, or it strikes the watchful family members as too lazy or improvident to take care of their sibling or child. At a climactic moment the family intervenes to chase the suitor away. Subsequently, it is revealed that the creature was not, after all, a human being: in the words of the Kamsá narrators (often attributed to story protagonists), *cha ndoñe krischian*, "he/she is not a human being," spoken in a hushed tone mixed of awe and repugnance.[1]

It seems reasonable to conjecture that these plots might have something to do with assessing the proper social distance in choosing a marriage partner, a theme that figures prominently in Claude Lévi-Strauss's discussion of South American Indian mythology (Lévi-Strauss 1978). One might imagine a practical warning conveyed in these stories, to the effect that marriage is serious business and conjugal mates should not be brought in from too distant (or too intimate) a social realm. But I do not wish to pursue a sociological reading of the narratives at present. Instead, I take my cue from hints of a deeper cosmological significance to the material: in some tellings, the narrator portrays the suitors as wise people, doctors, or messengers, possessed of knowledge that could have converted a life of drudgery into a life of ease and abundance. These tellings are decisive, for me, in casting this body of myth as a treatment of themes central to the Sibundoy account of ethnogenesis.

The common element linking the narratives in this cluster is the animal-person suitor. But within this field different possibilities are imagined by Sibundoy storytellers. At one extreme, the animal-person suitor is successful in carrying away his intended mate, and

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the suitor-abductor and his human companion may even succeed in producing a child. This result, clearly a logical option within the system, is common in South American myth but extraordinary in the Sibundoy corpus. In fact, it occurs only once in my materials, in the tale of Juan Oso, John the Bear, and this narrative has all the markings of an import to Sibundoy tradition, most likely from a mestizo source. For example, the plot has Juan Oso going to school in town, and then shipping off to fight a war in the north of Colombia, details completely alien in the mythology of Sibundoy's native peoples. Tales of seductive bears are prominent in Sibundoy mythology, but normally the woman manages to outwit the bear and send him running. For present purposes, Sibundoy mythology can be said to be distinctive for its indifference—or downright hostility—to the logical possibility of incorporating the animal suitor into the human family.

A far more common expression of this theme is a curtailed version in which the intruder is simply warded off, and the lesson drawn is that humans must not tolerate such levels of intimacy with animal-spirits. The suitor is just too strange, or too lazy, to merit inclusion in the family. In this subset, no mention is made of special powers or the lure of a more favorable compact with the natural world. Instead, these tales revolve around the importance of maintaining the integrity of the human community. Since the mythologies of South America often feature the at least tentative incorporation of spirit intruders, the prevalence of tales in which the suitors are dismissed reinforces a perception of Sibundoy myth as a special case.

View of Sibundoy Valley from western periphery

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The most replete versions of this mythic archetype add to the rejection of the uncouth suitor the wistful realization that an earthly paradise was close to hand but for all time surrendered at these crucial junctures in cosmic time. These renderings of the theme are most assiduous in connecting the narrative plot to the larger framework of Sibundoy cosmogenesis. The narrators step back from the story and speculate on its crushing impact. I will argue that this theme of paradise forestalled is central to Sibundoy mythical thought. Like the biblical loss of paradise and related mythological ploys, it accounts for the harshness of life as it is experienced by mortals.

In the Sibundoy case we have a paradise that is prevented from occurring rather than a paradise that once existed but was lost. According to the elders, the deities had intended to alleviate human suffering by making it easy to harvest and prepare food, but the messengers sent to convey this knowledge were not successful in doing so. Seeking entry to the human family, they were discouraged or chased away, and in retreat took their precious store of knowledge with them. Nonetheless, this cluster of mythic narrative appears, in aggregate, to advance the position that it was necessary to expel these animal spirits, and to accept the present conditions of human life, with all its hardship and suffering, in return for a stable platform conducive to the establishment of civil society. For Sibundoy mythology charts the gradual channeling of spiritual potency towards the margins of the cosmos, a trend that makes possible the emergence of human civilization.

Suitors on the Move

The plots of these myths depict suitors in action, soliciting, seducing, or abducting their intended mates. It is evident that this cluster of narrative, held together by the constant motif of the ambitious suitor, is quite diversified in its plot structures and exhibits considerable ambivalence towards the key moral issues it addresses. Perhaps these tensions present within the tradition contribute to the vitality of the material, for these stories are by far the most often told when Sibundoy people gather in the afternoons and evenings to exchange with one another tales of the ancestors. This body of narrative is sufficiently nuanced to allow Sibundoy audiences to contemplate the core issues from several different angles, and the diversity in narrative roles and outcomes makes it possible for individual performers and audience members to create their own personal emphases and meanings.

Let's take a closer look at the targeted myths. I have collected from Sibundoy narrators several mythic narratives featuring the expulsion of the animal suitor. The suitor varies in species and gender but the outline of the plot holds constant, always leading to the denial of the proposed marriage. In one Kamsá tale, an owl-man comes to live in the home of a young woman, where he refuses to approach the fire, telling the family (in Inga, the language of the other native community in the valley) that he is "ashamed of his little nose" (*nuka singallalla pingawaku*).[2] Here the alien character of the suitor is marked verbally by his use of the language of the indigenous other, the Inga. This detail proposes a sociological reading—that spouses must be procured from the appropriate social

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distance—and in fact mixed marriages are not favored in either the Kamsá or Inga communities. In any case, the family eventually discovers that the suitor is an owl, and he is sent away. In another tale of this ilk, the hawk-man arrives at the home of a young woman, but he is unkempt in appearance and pecks at piles of snails in the garden when nobody is watching. When the marriage is disallowed, he flies to a branch of a nearby tree and calls out, "*pex, pex.*"

Another instance portrays an odd young woman who has come into the home of a young man, her intended spouse. Told by my Kamsá hostess, María Juajibioy of the *vereda* (hamlet) San Felix, this story merits closer attention for its handling of the unmasking of the imposter. I reproduce here a text of doña María's performance, which she called *tobiaxbe parlo*, "The Tale of the Young Woman," in my English translation of her Kamsá original.

A young woman arrived at the home of a young man.
And that intended mother-in-law said to her:
"Come plant *barbacuano* seed."
And that intended daughter-in-law answered her:
"I myself will become *barbacuano*."

Then: "Plant some *achira* for me."
Again she responded like that: "I myself will become *achira*."
And she just wouldn't listen, how could she beg her?

Then that intended mother-in-law went out to plant corn.
Where she was planting corn she found a centipede.
And then as she was planting corn, she struck it with her digging stick.
She just calmly continued planting corn.
When she finished she returned to the house.
Then she found that intended daughter-in-law in bad shape.
She was sitting there with her head all banged up,
she found her with her head covered.

Then that intended mother-in-law inquired:
"Why, Niece, are you like this?"
Then she answered: "Didn't you, Aunt, do this to me?"
Then she said to her: "Where did this happen to you?"
Then she responded: "In the garden, didn't you strike me with the digging stick?"
Then she responded: "I struck a large centipede like that with my digging stick.
Then you are not a human being," she said to her.

That's all there is just as I know it.

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María's telling focuses on the relationship between the young woman and her intended mother-in-law, as many of these tales do. In the trial marriage arrangement, the candidate for spouse is generally tested for attributes likely to contribute to a successful match. Typically, the young person is asked to do some work of the sort expected of a young man or woman. Here, the young woman is requested to help her intended mother-in-law plant the edible roots known in Spanish as *barbacuano (Colocasia esculenta)* and *achira (Canna* aff. *edulis)*, staples in the diet of the native communities. The young woman gives a most peculiar response: she will transform herself into the very foods she has been requested to plant. The older woman, disappointed by this response, goes into the garden by herself to plant corn. She strikes a centipede there with her digging stick but thinks nothing of it. Later she discovers that the young woman seeking to marry her son is in fact the same centipede that she struck in the garden. María ends her tale at this juncture, though it is safe to infer, on the basis of related tales, that the marriage was not permitted to take place.

Such tales draw attention to the peculiar character of these animal suitors. They express repugnance at the idea of matrimony between humans and such outlandish mates. The protagonist of María's story is the older woman. She fulfills cultural expectations by behaving respectfully towards her son's intended spouse. Moreover, she is a planter of corn and other food crops and thus a participant in the nourishing of her family. In this light, her unmasking of the centipede-woman, and her presumed frustration of the intended match, complete the profile of a heroine upholding the banner of civilization. María is herself a renowned planter of corn, and I sense that she identifies with the woman protagonist of her tale. The crucial detail, for the present discussion, is the imperative to weed out these would-be intruders into the human family. There is no mention in this tale of an elusive paradise, though the centipede-woman's suggestion that she could make food from her own body might be construed as a possible avenue to a life of less toil.

In the most complete tellings, the narrator laments the failure in communication that deprives human beings of knowledge they were meant to acquire. In the best known and most recited mythic narrative in the Sibundoy Valley, "The Tale of the Shulupsi Bird," a woman arrives at the home of a young man seeking to be accepted as his wife. The older woman points to some baskets of corn and asks the younger woman to make *chicha*, maize beer essential to all social occasions, as the family is hosting a *minga*, a collaborative work party, and the workers will be expecting refreshment at the end of the day. The older woman goes off to help in the fields. When she returns, she sees the young woman sitting in the patio of the house, calmly combing her hair. The baskets of corn appear to be full, indicating that the chicha has not been made. The older woman soundly scolds the younger one, who takes offense, and turning into a small bird, dips into the chicha barrel (which is after all full of freshly brewed chicha) and disappears forever. As she leaves, she pronounces a kind of curse, speaking (in one version of the tale) as follows:

"In my day I was used to making a barrel of chicha
with only a few grains of corn,
but from this day on,

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women will have to grind much corn on the mortar
to produce only a single barrel of chicha."

This parting volley lands as a heavy blow, and narrators of this tale often condemn the behavior of the older woman, who is portrayed as being too quick to anger and negligent in not first inspecting the chicha barrel to see if it was in fact empty. In some tellings, the son complains to his mother that she is always chasing off his intended brides. To some extent the empathy of the narrator falls on the suitor, though the concerns of family members are presented as having some legitimacy as well.

"The Tale of the Owl" is another member of this class, and I have an expansive performance of it in Inga, from my compadre, Francisco Tandioy, of the vereda Vichoy, near Santiago. Francisco's narrative performance is as diffuse as doña María's is concise (see appendix). His elaborations provide a glimpse of the daily routine in Inga households,

Francisco and his mother, 1985

the regimen of long workdays punctuated by occasional periods of merriment when workers gather in the evenings to play music and dance. We get a fairly detailed portrait of conventions surrounding the collective labor crew, the *minga* and *cuadrilla*, summoned from among the neighboring families when there is a difficult task at hand. Much of this detail serves as a backdrop for the key elements in the plot, which revolve around the owl-man's efforts to win acceptance into the family of a young woman. These elements,

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presented in the most skeletal form in María's tale about the young woman, receive extensive treatment in Francisco's tale about the owl. Here we encounter the young couple pitted against the older generation, especially against the young woman's mother, who comes across as a polite but demanding taskmaster. The owl-man is roused before dawn, given a bowl of warm chicha for sustenance, and sent off to do all manner of labor for the family. In spite of these demands, he doesn't give up the project, and the young woman remains committed to the success of their quest for permission to marry. Many of the stories involving suitors contain the makings of such intergenerational strife, but this component is rarely developed as extensively as it is here.

Francisco artfully dramatizes the owl-man's lethargy. He seems to operate in slow motion compared to his dynamic mother-in-law, rising slowly from his bed, sharpening his machete in a desultory fashion, and digging two small holes in the ground when he is left to plant *arracacha (Arracacia xanthorriza)*, an edible root attaining its greatest varietal diversity in the Sibundoy Valley (Bristol 1968). This young man is anything but exemplary in his attitude toward work, and the sentiments of the parents are against allowing the match. They caution their daughter that such a man could hardly provide for a family, but she remains adamant that this suitor will become her husband. Even the workers are scornful of the lazy fellow, finding humor in his intention to clear a large section of forest by himself, and speaking with irony of his efforts in the field.

Another common element in these tales, the persisting bestiality of the suitor, receives ample coverage in Francisco's tale about the owl. The owl-man is unkempt, with hair flopping down over his eyes. He stands about scratching his head, or else disappears into the forest. The parents, not aware they are hosting an owl, have become accustomed to hearing owls hooting beside the house, normally taken by Sibundoy people as an omen of death. Unlike the other workers, the owl-man prefers solitude to mixing in with the dancers, and it is only through the efforts of his intended spouse that he emerges at all to socialize with people around him. This character's oddities finally arouse the suspicion of the older woman, who, at the moment of the tale's denouement, confronts him with query, "Would you be an owl?" All of the stories featuring animal suitors preserve the essential anomaly and ambiguity of these characters, who speak and act human to a degree but retain telltale traces of their animal natures.

As in "The Tale of the Shulupsi Bird," the animal suitor in Francisco's "The Tale of the Owl" possesses knowledge that could make a world of difference in the lives of human beings. In his case, with a sequence of shouts he can transform a wooded hillside into a garden replete with food ripe for the harvest, as depicted in this passage (episode X, p.34):

> With just one shout, they say, he could leave a whole field planted.
> The first planting, the clearing, whatever needed doing, he left it done.
> When he shouted a second time, he left it planted, they say.
> When he shouted a third time, then it turned into corncobs.
> And when he shouted a fourth time, he left the corn harvested.

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When the older woman assails the suitor with his shortcomings and insinuates that he might be an owl, he undoes the miraculous work he had done, and the mountainside returns to thick forest. Confirming her suspicions, he turns into an owl and flies off into the trees calling out, "*kukukú, kukukú, kukukú.*" The departure of the owl, like that of the shulupsi, is interpreted as a kind of judgment or curse, condemning people to a life of futile labor. The narrator closes the tale with a meditation on the lost opportunity enclosed in the owl's story (episode X, p.35).

> Because of that, imagine how we would live,
> if the owl were still a person?

Remorse for paradise forestalled, for an easier way of life that was for one moment almost within grasp, is palpable in Francisco's story. But the alien character of the owl-man remains a troubling cause for hesitation even as we contemplate a world in which food could be procured by emitting a series of shouts.

There is one other dimension critical to understanding this mythical theme elaborated in Francisco's story, and that is the owl-man as "a wise man," in some versions "a doctor," a spiritual operator whose knowledge penetrated the mysteries of the spirit world. As Francisco relays it, the old people explain that the owl was "an owner of gardens." The Spanish borrowing *dueño* is used in Inga and in Kamsá to indicate a powerful spirit presiding over some domain of the natural world. I have collected Sibundoy myths that

The lush Kamsá garden

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tell of the dueño of the river, a fierce spirit with the face of a bird, and the dueño of the wild pigs, who warns hunters not to kill more than one or two animals at a time (McDowell 1994). The implication here is that the owl-person was one of these nature lords, and that his domain was the forest and the plants that grow from its soil.

Further evidence of this possibility is provided in the interesting description of the owl-person at work in the forest (episode IV, pp.25–26):

> After that he himself, from the far corner, they say, went to get started.
> If they looked, if they looked, they saw nothing in the way of clearing.
> Just from time to time they heard a call.
> And at that time, they heard something like many trees falling.
> But if they looked, they couldn't see a thing.
> Just as it was, they say, it remains.
> At times it sounded, they say, as if many people were conversing.
> At other times it sounded like many people, they say, were shouting.
> And hearing that, then, they say, they were getting scared.
> One of them said, they say:
> "Could it be the spirit of the forest?
> This could be an evil hour."

Although the workers cannot see what is happening from the corner he is working, they hear the sound of many voices and the sound of trees crashing to the ground. One of them suggests the spirit of the forest could be present, and wonders if they might be experiencing an "evil hour," a dangerous encounter with powerful denizens of the spirit world. Evidence of this sort supports the theory that the owl-man was a powerful doctor, a spirit being able to manipulate the spiritual potency in nature to achieve remarkable physical outcomes. Among the traits ascribed in Sibundoy mythology to these powerful doctors is the ability to bring the dead back to life, and of special relevance here, to take both animal and human form.

The Cosmological Setting

In order to settle upon a viable interpretation of the suitor cluster in Sibundoy mythology, we must locate these mythical themes within the framework of the cosmology that informs and sustains them. The material on its own is subject to several different lines of interpretation, as I have already noted. It is only when the cosmological setting is brought into the discussion that the theme of paradise forestalled gains the upper hand, emerging as an inclusive analytical design comprehending and reconciling the different strands of meaning developed in this cluster of myths. In this explanatory model, the theme of paradise forestalled subsumes its rivals, the theme of preserving the integrity of the human family, and that of seeking an appropriate mate, into a moral philosophy charged by the tension between aspirations for an improved life and acceptance of the human condition.

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The Sibundoy cosmology can be adduced through examination of the entire corpus of mythology, and through inspection of ancillary resources such as belief proverbs attributed to the ancestors and the actions and language of the indigenous healers, the native doctors. This topic is too extensive to cover in detail here, but let me provide a brief sketch in order to ground our discussion of the suitor cluster in Sibundoy myth. In essence, Sibundoy mythology tells the story of the emergence of civilization in the Sibundoy Valley through a sequence of cosmic stages, each one more closely approximating the current situation. The main actors in this drama of ethnogenesis are the ancestors, the people of the first or early times, and their primary task is to assert control over a highly volatile spiritual universe. Through a series of interventions on the part of the ancestors, this spiritual potency is gradually banished from center-stage, leaving in its place an inert zone susceptible to the growth and persistence of stable social institutions.

According to taita Bautista Juajibioy, the most knowledgeable of the elders I consulted on these matters, the world began in an age of darkness that comes to an end with the first sunrise, giving way to the dawn time or the age of light. Initially, there is no fire, so all creatures eat raw foods, and this phase is known as the raw age, *kaka tempo* in Kamsá.

Taita Bautista, Kamsá leader and storyteller

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Eventually the animal spirits acquire fire and corn seed from the culture hero, and the ancestral period is launched (Juajibioy 1987). The early phases of this period are marked by the presence of celestial deities as key players. Spirits in the form of animal-people interact with the first people, and substrate populations of odd spirit beings inhabit the margins of this primordial realm. This initial moment in the ancestral period is defined by a spiritual dynamism that invalidates all boundaries and makes mutability of form the order of the day. In one crucial mythic narrative, the original human beings interact with the sun and the moon as mythic personages, and the culture hero is transformed from a man into a woman and ultimately into a small male child who takes refuge with his uncle or grandfather, the thunder deity. This world is so charged with spiritual power that it lacks any inclination towards stability, predictability, and order.

The remainder of the ancestral period, really the key segment in this account of Sibundoy ethnogenesis, describes the taming of this spiritual potency. The culture hero (known as Wangetsmuna in Kamsá and as Kalusturinda Taita, or Lord of the Carnival, in Inga) demonstrates the proper modes of sexual reproduction and consumption of food, and vanquishes the recalcitrant substrate population. In one important episode, he sounds a trumpet he has received from the thunder deity; from that moment on, we are told, people are to remain people and animals, animals. This moment of demarcation at last separates out these two animate domains that have mixed indiscriminately in the earlier phases. As the ancestral period evolves into the modern period, brute spiritual potency is gradually confined to the edges of the inhabited world, to the "evil times" and "evil places" still subject to a resurgent spirituality. The modern period is distinguished by a secure center where the institutions of civil society can flourish and a spirit realm hovering on the margins of human experience, where it lingers as a source of power and danger.

The stories about animal suitors straddle the divide between the ancestral and modern periods. The tales identifying their protagonists as powerful doctors capable of clearing land with a shout, or making chicha from a few grains of corn, hark back to the formative phase of the ancestral period when spiritual agency was still rampant in the world. These mythical actors propose modifications in the human condition that could possibly have taken hold. Indeed, some explications by Sibundoy elders claim that the deities intended these capacities to accrue to human society. There is the feel to this material that the outcome might have been different, that, for instance, the owl-man might have been accepted into the family of the young woman and contributed to his relations and progeny the knowledge and power he possessed. On the other hand, the tales emphasizing the otherness of these animal suitors, their intrusiveness in the human domain, appear to fall on the near side of this cosmic watershed, after the culture hero blows his trumpet and differentiates animals from people.

Viewed in this context of ethnogenesis, of the civilizing process in the Sibundoy Valley, the tales of animal suitors appear to foreground the theme of paradise forestalled. The exclusion of these spiritually powerful agents is part and parcel of the establishment of civil society. The owl-man, the shulupsi-woman, and the centipede-woman cannot be admitted to the human family, because the project of civilization can only succeed by isolating and containing the spiritual potency they represent. To suggest otherwise is to

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contemplate the return of the charged world the ancestors fought so hard to subdue. As attractive as their gifts might be, these suitors must be sent on their way to avoid compromising this domain friendly to stable and replicable civil institutions. Human beings must turn away from the paradise these creatures propose, even though the harsh routine of labor and death is the difficult alternative.

Wild and Settled Indians

An important stream of recent work in the Andes has developed the premise that mythologies are tightly connected to the historical circumstances of their production. They are not, or not exclusively, remnants of antiquated modes of thought, or abstract ciphers in the universal play of the imagination. Well-focused case studies have shown that economic and political concerns of communities, as well as strategic calculations of individuals, play a significant role in shaping the content of Andean mythic narratives (see Urton 1990; Salomon and Urioste 1991; Howard-Malverde 1990). Taking a cue from precedents like these, we might inquire how the theme of paradise forestalled, as depicted in Sibundoy mythology and defined by Sibundoy cosmology, relates to the historical experience of the community. I will conclude by suggesting that the progression to tales of animal suitors, with the prevailing outcome of rejection by the host family, corresponds in some measure with the historical circumstances of the Sibundoy peoples. I contend that the status of the Sibundoy indigenous communities within the Spanish colony, and later in the emerging nation of Colombia, as *indios civilizados*, can be linked to the prominence of the theme of paradise forestalled in their mythology.

Let's begin by noting the importance of the motif of animal suitors in the mythologies of the Americas. In mythic narratives documented throughout native South America, many an animal suitor approaches the home of a human family seeking admittance. For the most part, these suitors operate in a climate of spiritual plasticity featuring remarkable transformations in the material world and the active participation of celestial bodies such as the sun and moon, the thunder god, and constellations such as the Pleiades. In short, the mythical world in which these animal suitors pursue their mates is a setting of rampant spiritual agency much like the Sibundoy cosmos at the outset of the ancestral period. There are instances in which the suitor is unmasked and sent packing, but this possibility is not the normal one. For example, the Shuar, resident on the eastern flank of the Andes in Ecuador, tell of a garden-woman who brings food into existence through mere utterance, and who is at last discouraged by family members and chooses to leave (Guallart 1978). More often though, the animal suitor gains temporary acceptance into the human family, and works there as a catalyst unleashing forces causing drastic transformations within a world of boundless fluidity. In one common scenario, the new family member confers upon this family or some of its members access to great spiritual power. Among the Yekuana of Guiana, for example, "marriage to an animal spirit, even if dangerous, brings with it the chance to acquire power" (Bierhorst 1988:71). Across a broad sweep of South American myth, the incorporation of animal suitors into a human

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family is a persistent theme, sometimes entailing a reconfiguration of the prior cosmic scheme, sometimes the acquisition of formidable spiritual power.

In order to highlight the singularity of the Sibundoy case, let's inspect a fairly typical instance from the South American corpus, a Tucuna myth containing an episode similar to the Sibundoy story about the shulupsi bird. The Tucuna are a tropical forest group residing far downstream from the Sibundoy Valley, along tributaries to the Amazon River in central Brazil. The myth, taken from the work of Curt Nimuendajú (1952), serves as the puzzle largely motivating the discussion in Claude Lévi-Strauss's *The Origin of Table Manners* (1978), the third volume in his *Introduction to a Science of Mythology*. Lévi-Strauss labels it M354, and gives it the title, "The hunter Monmanéki and his wives." In this tale, the hunter Monmanéki makes several tries at selecting a mate, each attempt landing him in severe difficulties. The feel of spiritual power is very strong throughout these episodes. His final attempt at marriage, for example, is with a woman of his own people whose body parts detach themselves from her torso when she goes out to catch fish.

There are two episodes that echo the animal suitor myths in the Sibundoy Valley. In one of these, Monmanéki marries an attractive woman who turns out to be the earth-woman and moves like a worm underneath the earth's surface. Monmanéki's mother turns the soil with a shell and inadvertently shears the lips of the earth-woman, who is embarrassed by her condition and disappears. This episode contains elements reminiscent of doña María's story about the centipede. The more striking parallel involves the macaw-woman who is able to fill five large jars with chicha using only one ear of corn. As in the Sibundoy case, Monmanéki's mother finds the mass of corncobs unused and without inspecting the jars reproaches the younger woman, who takes offense and resumes her animal form. However, in the Tucuna myth she calls upon her husband to follow her, and the next episode tells of his attempt to do so. At this moment in the tale Monmanéki turns into a bird and his canoe becomes an aquatic monster, the lord of the fish on one stretch of the Solimões River.

The similarity of plot elements strongly suggests a connection between the Sibundoy and Tucuna narratives, but the handling of the material indicates rather different lines of interpretation. The Tucuna episodes are awash in a world of infinite possibility. Their protagonists shift shape and move among ontological categories with ease and apparent caprice. These attributes lend the Tucuna episodes cited here an aura of radical otherness. Sibundoy mythology exudes this same aura of the exotic in tales depicting the earlier cosmic framework, but in Sibundoy tales of animal suitors this aura persists in attenuated form only. In this portion of the corpus, we sense that the contours of a world much like our own are beginning to take hold, and spiritual agency, still at the heart of the narrative, is encapsulated as an aberration to be censured and avoided.

I suggest that the theme of animal or spirit suitors is part of the bedrock of native South American mythology, and that it exists in two distinct reflexes, one replete and the other attenuated. Scanning the evidence on hand, it appears that the more prevalent reflex is the former set, marked by the kind of brute spiritual potency exhibited in the Tucuna episodes describing the hunter's search for an appropriate mate. I cannot at present chart the occurrence of the second reflex, marked by a spiritual potency attenuated through the

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presence of stable civic institutions, but I can attest its presence as a dominant theme in the mythology of the Sibundoy Valley. Let me propose that we are dealing here with an evolutionary process, in which the attenuated forms emerge under the appropriate circumstances from the replete forms. I am suggesting with reference to the Sibundoy case that these conditions include an awareness of status differentiation, perhaps indigenous in origin but nurtured by the political realities of the Spanish colony, between the *indio civilizado* and the *indio salvaje*, the civilized and savage Indian.

It is conceivable that the Sibundoy treatment of animal suitors is influenced to some degree by European accounts of sacred history, placing emphasis on an acceptance of the human condition as the necessary state of affairs. Unlike the biblical account of paradise lost, the Sibundoy account projects a paradise forestalled, a land of easy chicha and easy living that might have come into being if only pivotal transactions at the close of the ancestral period had been accomplished more smoothly. The element of an intended paradise, lost through the reckless behavior of key ancestors, operates in both systems to account for the rigors of life in a harsh world. It is tempting to relate the permutation of the original mythic material into a tale of paradise forestalled to the influence of historical factors affecting the Sibundoy communities during their long travail as subjects of the Spanish crown, initially, and later, as citizens of the Colombian nation.

We have clear evidence of Spanish contact with Sibundoy peoples by the middle of the sixteenth century. From the arrival of the first *doctrinero* or Catholic religious teacher in 1547, to the twilight of the twentieth century, when the Capuchin mission to the valley was finally terminated, the Sibundoy Indians were under the tutelage of one missionary program or another (Bonilla 1972). Moreover, as residents of a zone transitional between the highlands and lowlands, the Sibundoy native peoples have retained links and affinities with both the highland chiefdoms and the nomadic lowland populations. Even today the Kamsá and Inga communities draw on lowland resources in their traditional medicine, but profess a more cultured identity as citizens of a settled agricultural and pastoral society. Members of the lowland extensions of Sibundoy communities are known as *amigos*, and are recognized as allies, but the native populations fanning outwards along tributaries to the Amazon are regarded with an ambivalent mixture of awe and disdain. For highland peoples on the flanks of the Andes, as for many urban, mestizo communities, the people living along the lowland rivers draining into the Amazon are respected as purveyors of remarkable spiritual power (Taussig 1987).

During the Spanish colony, a broad distinction was drawn between *indios civilizados* and *indios salvajes* or *silvestres* (Bonilla 1972). The former were thought to be human beings in possession of a soul, and therefore worthy of redemption in the eyes of God. Typically, the Spanish soldiers, settlers, and missionaries recognized in the settled societies of the highland regions a civilization in some ways like their own. These Indians could be credited with valuable accomplishments, and with noble character in some cases, even though they were viewed as misdirected through the evil agency of the devil. The Indians of the lowlands tended to receive a very different treatment. Stigmatized as naked savages, as cannibals, they were portrayed by the Spanish as more animal than human, and it was questioned whether they even possessed that defining essence of the human being,

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the immortal soul. In the Spanish colonies of South America it mattered whether you were perceived to be a civilized or a wild Indian. For this reason, Indians with religious instruction learned to kneel at the approach of a Spanish horseman, calling out *sacramento*, in reference to the sacraments of the Catholic church (Bonilla 1972:35).

In this setting it was obviously advantageous to argue for recognition as civilized Indians. Acceptance of such a claim might save your life, and if you were lucky, allow you to remain on the land and in the society of your ancestors. The Sibundoy peoples evidently staked this claim with some success; although dispossessed of the best lands in the Sibundoy Valley, they have persevered in their ancestral homeland, and though they have been brutally mistreated at times, they have not suffered the extreme dislocation and dispersion, or outright genocide, visited on many of their lowland neighbors. The most important codification of law affecting Colombia's native peoples, Law 89, the so-called "Natives Law," of 1890, preserves this key distinction; it recognizes the territories and tribal governments of the tribes "already domesticated to civil life" while assigning "the savages being gradually brought to civilization" to the care of the missionaries (Bonilla 1972:58; Dover 1995).

It appears that long before the arrival of the Europeans the highland Andean populations would have differentiated themselves from the lowland populations dwelling in the adjacent Amazonian basin. The Kamsá and Inga were sedentary groups, allied with powerful highland networks, and they were highly successful agriculturalists with maize as their staple crop but with a remarkably diversified inventory of cultivated food sources (Bristol 1968). This awareness of difference is manifest in the pervasive Andean concept of the *auca* or *augca*, a substrate population of heathen savages, in some accounts portrayed much like the lowland indigenous peoples (McDowell 1992). In the Sibundoy Valley, as at other latitudes of the Andes, these heathen savages had to be removed in order for the ancestors of the current people to establish themselves. This native formulation played right into the Spanish differentiation of "civilized" from "savage" or "wild" humans. During the colonial period, Sibundoy Indians no doubt benefited from assuming the status of civilized Indians. Moreover, through prolonged interaction with Spanish missionaries and settlers, these communities were partly shaped through contact with the culture of Spanish Catholicism.

One indication of a pervasive and influential process of early cultural exchange in the Sibundoy Valley is the development of a specialized manner of speaking known to this day in Spanish as *el lenguaje ritual*, or "ceremonial language" (see McDowell 1983, 1990). Persisting today as a medium of formal communication for both Ingas and Kamsás, this marked speech form invokes the Catholic deities as well as the indigenous ancestors in conferring a blessing on community affairs. In the modulations of prayerful chant, ceremonial speakers make use of borrowed Spanish roots and complex verb inflections in the native languages to stress the dependence of all mortal events on divine intervention. The ceremonial speech code has the markings of a hybridized cultural form at the intersection of political domains, asserting by implication the civilized status of the Sibundoy peoples.

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Another measure of this process of mutual adaptation is the permutation of the animal suitor cluster in the direction of paradise forestalled. The theme of paradise forestalled can be appreciated as a regional oicotype of a prominent mythological theme, a vernacular adaptation responding to particular social and political elements in the historical setting. The characteristic move of this portion of Sibundoy mythology, a lament for a paradise forestalled, takes place within an initial context of identity formation placing a premium on the stabilization of spiritual potency and the establishment of civil society. In a subsequent moment, the concept of paradise forestalled would have resonated with the Catholic theme of paradise lost, and coincided with a Sibundoy claim for status within the social hierarchy of the Spanish colony.

The current emphasis on this theme in Sibundoy storytelling may respond in part to a shifting of the entire corpus towards the status of a residual mythology. No longer strictly tethered to religious belief or practice, the mythic narratives of the Sibundoy peoples are in the process of acquiring the episodic character more typical of folktale than mythology. It may be that these tendencies have placed greater emphasis on dramatic tales of animal suitors unmasked. It could be argued that this drift towards folktale coincides with the drift towards assimilation of the Sibundoy peoples as a regional expression of the Colombian national culture. This swath of the Andes has been characterized as a scene of "deculturation," where the highland cultures are presumed to have lost much of their former substance (Rowe 1946). A more popular version of this notion is the claim in general circulation in Colombia that the nation's *indios* are evolving into *campesinos* and joining the mass of rural workers and their extensions into the cities.

But these expectations seem premature in light of recent developments in the region. During the last few decades it has become more desirable to be an Indian, for both practical and sentimental reasons. Communities that had apparently completed the transition from indio to campesino were suddenly recovering their indigenous identity and petitioning for the political status of indio (Rappaport 1990). In the zones where indios and campesinos mix, it is now common to find campesinos presenting claims for membership in the indigenous communities, so they can avoid military service and enjoy other benefits of that status. Impressive efforts at cultural recuperation such as the work of Musu Runakuna (The New People) among the Inga have accorded new prestige to such traditional expressions as carnival, native medicine, arts and crafts, and mythic narrative (Dover 1995). If deculturation was indeed at play, it would seem that a deliberate policy of reculturation is the name of the game these days.

For the native peoples of Colombia's Sibundoy Valley, the indigenous identity may have experienced some attenuation but it never vanished. Kamsá and Inga continue to be learned as first tongues, the annual carnival remains a time to gather and renew the community, and the traditional medicine is still central to people's lives. Signs of persistence and revival in these and other areas indicate a still-thriving and distinctive ethnicity. To be sure, there are pressures constantly exerted against this ethos: the relentless onslaught of the national culture through media outlets, the dangerous proximity of Colombia's devastating civil war. In this context the traditional culture becomes more

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subject to self-conscious manipulation even as it takes on deeper meaning as a connection to place and to the past.

Justo Jacanamijoy, my Kamsá host, once explained to me in reference to "The Tale of the Shulupsi Bird" that the truth of the story is imprinted on the body of the bird, with its smooth head feathers and ruffled body feathers. "You can see," he observed, "that the story is true, for the young woman was combing her hair but then dipped into the chicha barrel when she became angry." Riding the wave of renewed appreciation for indigenous culture, Sibundoy natives continue to find evidence in the world around them of a civilizing process centered in the Sibundoy Valley. And in the current political climate, they may well find understanding in the moral philosophy lying at the heart of their stories about animal suitors, much as humanity through the ages has contemplated the tantalizing dream of a paradise lost, misplaced, or forestalled.

Appendix: Kuskungumanda Parlu
The Owl's Tale

as performed by Francisco Tandioy Jansasoy

A note on the text:

I have this version of a favorite Sibundoy mythic narrative from my compadre, Francisco Tandioy, who learned it from his mother. My transcription of the Inga and translation into English are informed by ethnopoetic principles developed during the last quarter of the twentieth century with inspiration from the work of Dell Hymes, Joel Sherzer, Dennis Tedlock, and many others. I have grouped the text into eleven episodes and given each of these a brief title, to guide the reader through this prolonged tale. As is customary in ethnopoetic transcriptions, I present the narrative in the form of poetic lines that capture the phrasing and pacing of the original Inga performance, to create an analogue between the spoken original and the printed transcription. Lines bearing quoted speech are indented to visually mark their contrastive sonority in the spoken performance. The English translation remains fairly close to the Inga original, with modifications aimed at recreating in the target language the flow of narration in the source language. One deviation is my decision not to translate every occurrence of the ubiquitous Inga suffix *–si*, obligatory in Inga to mark those sentences that convey information heard about rather than witnessed. But I do sprinkle "they say" here and there to remind that we are in this mythic narrative mode.

I (The owl suitor)

Ñugpata kuskungu, sug runasi, kanga iachá.
In the old days, the owl was like a person, they say.

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Chiwanka, sug warmipagmasi tiaringapa rirka, sutipa ña kasarangapa.
And because of that, he went to the home of a woman, they say, to stay, in truth, in order to marry.

Chiuraka, paipa warmipa mamaka, tukui ima rurai tiaskasi, paitaka mandarka rurangapa.
And at that time that woman's mother, whatever there was to be done, they say, she ordered him to do it.

Suguraka piunma, iamta chigtai, u imapasi rurai tiaskata, rurangapa.
Sometimes to work in the fields, to split wood, or to do whatever needed to be done.

Iamtama ringapa chaiakuuraka, askurinti amsamsasi, iacharka atarichinga.
And when he had to go for firewood, she would wake him well before dawn, they say.

Nispaka, ninga:
And then she will say:

> Diusmanda, iamta apapuagriijimika.
> "Please be so good as to go and bring firewood for me.
>
> Ñimapasi, mana tiapuanchu, ninita piachingapa.
> I don't have anything to start the fire with."

Chiuraka, killaimanda killaimandasi, uma aspirispa, aspirispa, iamtama chingarigringa, iacharka.
And at that time slowly, slowly, they say, scratching, scratching his head, he would go off for the firewood.

Sug mati asuallasi, iacharka charichinga.
Just a bowl of chicha, they say, she would hand him.

Ña chi manara tukuchigllapi, iacharkasi, ninga:
And before he finished it, they say, she would tell him:

> Kunauraka, diusmanda nukapa kusata aidapuagrii, chagrapi trabajangapa.
> "And now please go for me and help my husband work in the field.
>
> Mana kagpika, piunma katipuai.
> Or else, go along with the field workers for me."

Chisima, trabajumanda chaiauraka, suigra tukungapa kaj, tapudursi karka:
In the afternoon when they returned, the future mother-in-law inquired of them, they say:

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¿Kai musu trabajanchu u manachu trabaja?
"This young fellow, does he work or doesn't he work?"

Chasa niura, iacharkasi, aininga:
When she said that, they say, they replied:

Kai musuka, midiu killa wangumi ka.
"This young fellow is somewhat lazy.

Suguraka, iapa uma aspiillami iacha saiakunga.
Sometimes he is just standing there scratching his head.

Simpri katimi, muntunkuna aspii kidadur ka.
He always stays behind, scratching at the mounds of dirt."

II (Mother and daughter chat)

Ña chasa uiaspa, paipa suigra tukungapa kaska, paipa warmi wambrata iacharkasi, ninga:
On hearing that, she who was to be his mother-in-law said, they say, to her daughter:

Kai musuka, kamta manima kunbiningapa kanchu.
"This young fellow is not the one for you.

Mijur, sugwa kasarangi.
You should marry someone else.

Kai musuka, iapa puñusikimi ka.
This young fellow is quite a sleepyhead.

Trabajupa, iapa killawangumi ka.
When it comes to work, he is very lazy."

Chasa, paipa mama niuraka, chi sipas iacharkasi, aininga:
When her mother spoke like that, the girl would answer her, they say:

Kasarangapagllami kani, mas killawangu imawapasi.
"I will just marry him even if he is lazy.

Kasaraspaka, killai pudimi anchupuangajimta.
And marrying him, maybe he will get rid of his laziness for me, poor thing.

Nukata, mana killawangu imapasi rigchawanchu.
And to me he doesn't seem lazy at all.

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Kam mamallami, iapa unżag kangi.
You, Mother, are very hard on him.

Kammi, iapa mandapuangi,
You are the one who orders him around so much,

ni samachii imapasi, mana samachispalla.
without letting him rest, without even letting him rest.

Nispatami sug musukunataka, mitikuchipuarshangi.
For this reason you have made other young fellows run away from me."

III (Clearing the fields)

Ña chi musuka, chasa trabajachikugpi, imapasi manasi, mitiku.
And then this young fellow, being made to work like that, still is not running away.

Chi wasillapisi chisiaku, dunabis ña kasarangapa.
He remains all day in that house, they say, surely to get married.

Mana mitikujmanda, paipa suigra tukunga, nirkasi:
As he was not running away, his future mother-in-law told her, they say:

Kunauraka, ruku sachama kachasunchi, piunkunawa sukalangapa.
"And now we will send him into the forest with the field workers to clear some land.

Sukalai, mana aburispa mitikugpika, ñami pudingi kasaranga.
If he does not run away, tiring of clearing land, then you can marry him."

Ña sutipasi, piunkuna ruarka sukalangapa.
Then in truth they asked for field workers to clear some land.

Chi puncha, kuskunguta askurinti amsamsasi, atarichirkakuna.
That day they awoke the owl well before dawn.

Sug aska atun aswa matisi, atarigllapi charichirka:
Just as he awoke, she handed him a large bowl of maize beer:

Animu churai nispa, kunapunchaka patruniangapami chaiaku.
Saying "Have courage, today you will be managing the work project.

Duiñusina, suma trabajaspami iukangi ñugpapuanga.
Like the owner, working hard, you must go ahead of the others."

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Ña chi aswa mati tukuchiuraka, paipa suigra tukungapa kajka, nirkasi:
Then when he finished the bowl of chicha, his future mother-in-law told him, they say:

Kunauraka, machiti suma apilagrii.
"And now go and sharpen well your machete.

Suma pilu machiti i achami sukalangapa, ministí.
You will need a very sharp machete and ax to clear the land."

Chi musuka, pudi mana pudisi, killaimanda machiti apilarka.
And that young fellow, could he or couldn't he, from laziness, he sharpened his machete.

Apilai puchukaspaka, ruku sachamasi rirka, ña piunkunawa sukalangapa.
Finishing the sharpening, he went off into the forest to clear land with the field workers.

Ruku sachama, piunkunawa chaiagrispaka, ña mainigmanda kallaringapa kagtasi, kawachigrirka.
Arriving with the field workers in the deep forest, he went to show them where they should begin working, they say.

Chasa kawachigrispaka, nirkasi:
Going to show them like that, he told them, they say:

Diusmanda, kainigmanda kallaripuachi.
"Please start from here for me.

Diusmanda, pariju, pariju, apapuangichi.
Please, in good, good order, complete this work for me.

Dirichu sachakunataka, diusmanda pur dius almapuangichi.
Please set aside, without cutting them, the straight lengths of trunk.

Ujala, kuchupuanakungichi.
I hope you won't be cutting them.

Mas nispaka, wasichingapami ministiwangapa ka.
Later I will need them to build myself a house."

Chasa piunkunata ruaspaka, nirkasi:
Asking the help of the field workers like that, he told them, they say:

Nukaka chi kuchunigmandami, kasama kallaringpa rikuni.
"And I am going to get started from that far corner towards here.

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Ñami chisimaka, kaisuiu tupanakusunchi.
In the afternoon we will be meeting each other in this spot."

Chasa niuraka, piunkunaka askurintisi, kaparispa kingu kingu asirkakuna.
And when he said that, the field workers had a good laugh, bent over, really letting loose.

Askurinti asispaka, parlu parlusi, sukalai kallarirkakuna.
Letting out a big laugh, talking, talking, they began to clear the land.

IV (The spirit of the forest)

Nisaka kikinka, kuchunigmandasi, kallaringapa rirka.
After that he himself, from the far corner, they say, went to get started.

Kawagpi, kawagpi, manimasi imapasi sukalai kawarí.
If they looked, if they looked, they saw nothing in the way of clearing.

Diulpi, diulpillasi, kaparii uiarí.
Just from time to time they heard a call.

Chiuraka, askurintisi, sachukuna builtiajsina uiarí.
And at that time, they heard something like many trees falling.

Piru kawagpika, manimasi ñi imapasi kawarí.
But if they looked, they couldn't see a thing.

Chasalla kaskallasi, ka.
Just as it was, they say, it remains.

Sug ratu uiarinsi, askurinti parlanakujsina.
At times it sounded, they say, as if many people were conversing.

Sug ratuka, kaparinakujsina, askurinti achka gintisinasi, uiarí.
At other times it sounded like many people, they say, were shouting.

Chasa uiaspaka, ñasi mancharinakurka.
And hearing that, then, they say, they were getting scared.

Sug, nirkasi:
One of them said, they say:

¿Manachu ruku sacha waira kantra?
"Could it be the spirit of the forest?

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Tal bis, mala urachari ka.
This could be an evil hour."

V (The lunch break)

Nisaka, mana kasu ruraspallasi, sukalai apanakunlla, parlu parlu.
And then without paying attention, they continued clearing the field, talking, talking.

Parlanakuuraka, sug nirkasi:
When they were talking, one of them said, they say:

Chituku alli puncha, iapami iakunaiawaku.
"Such a sunny day, I am very thirsty.

¡Amalai aswita! Maillapasi kaipi tiantra.
Oh, for some maize beer, even if there were only a drop."

Sug ainirkasi:
Another replied, they say:

Ama llakikuijimi. Ñami chaupi puncha ka.
"Don't be sad, poor fellow, it's almost midday.

Ianujkuna, ñachari mikui i aswa apamunakú.
The cooks are already bringing food and maize beer."

Chasa, manara nii puchukagpisi, timpu mikui mangakuna aisaska chaiagrirkakuna.
Before he finished saying that, they arrived there bearing the pots of food.

Aswa purukuna apariska, chaiagrirkakuna, mikui karangapa.
Carrying jars of maize beer, they arrived, to give them food.

Chaiaspaka, nirkakunasi: Tuparimuichi mikungapa.
And arriving they told them, they say: "Come gather together to eat."

Chasa niuraka, ña tukuikunasi, tuparirkakuna mikungapa.
And when she said that, all of them, they say, came together to eat.

Tukui piunkunata karaspa, tapurkasi, ña chi musumanda.
After giving food to the field workers, she asked them, they say, about the young man.

Chiuraka, ainirkakunasi:

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And at that time, they replied, they say:

Chi kuchunigmanda, sukalangapami rirka.
"He went off to clear the field from that corner to here."

Chasa iuiaspaka, paipa warmi tukungapa kajka, kaparirkasi:
Hearing that, his future wife called out, they say:

Alá, alá, alá, samui mikungapa.
"Hello, hello, hello, come and eat."

Unaisi suiarka, piru manimasi, chaiagrí.
A good while, they say, she waited, but he did not arrive.

Chimanda, chi sipaska, nirkasi:
Because of that the young woman said, they say:

Mijur, chillapi karagrisa.
"It's better if I go over there to give it to him."

Chipi chaiagriuraka, manimasi, kawarí.
When she arrived over there, nobody, they say, did she see.

Diltudu mailla sukalai kallariskallasi, kawarí.
She saw that it had only begun to be cleared.

Chasa kawaspaka, kaparirkasi:
And seeing that, she called out, they say:

Alá, alá, alá, ¿Maipitaka kangi?
"Hello, hello, hello, where are you?"

Chiuraka, chi sacha ukunigmandasi, ainirka:
And at that time, from inside the forest, they say, he answered:

Kaipimi kani.
"Here I am."

¡Alá, alá, samui!
"Hello, hello, come here!

Api mikugsamuisi, nirka:
Come and eat your soup," she told him.

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Ña api mikuuraka, ikuti sukalai kallariisi, nirka:
And when he ate his soup, "Get started again clearing the field," she told him.

VI (The curse)

Chi sipas, kikinpa wasima, utka trabajangi nispasi, kutirka.
That young woman returned to her own house, saying, they say: "Work quickly."

Manara allilla wasima chaiagrigllapisi, tapurka:
Before she made it all the way back to her house, they say, she asked her:

Chi musuka, ¿trabajakunchu u manachu trabajaku?
"That young fellow, does he work or doesn't he work?"

Aja, ainirkasi. Askurinti jumbigtami trabajaku.
"Oh yes," she replied, "he is working so hard as to get all sweaty."

Ña chisima, piunkunawa chaiagriuraka.
Then in the afternoon he arrived with the field workers.

Paipa suigra tukungapa kajka, tapurkasi:
His future mother-in-law inquired, they say:

¿Trabajarshangichu u manachu trabajarshangi?
"Did you work or didn't you work?"

Chasa tapuuraka, piunkuna askurintisi, asirkakuna.
And when she asked that, the field workers had a good laugh, they say.

Ñami intiru chagra rurai puchukaku, ninkunasi.
"He is about to finish doing an entire field," they said.

Chiuraka, paipa suigra tukungapa kajka, nirkasi:
And at that time his future mother-in-law said, they say:

Mana nikuni: Killawangumi kangi.
"Aren't I saying it: you are a lazybones.

Uma aspillachari saiakurshangi, trabajangataka.
You were just standing there scratching your head instead of working."

Chiuraka, chi musuka rabiarispaka, nirkasi:
And at that time the young man, becoming angry, spoke, they say:

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Munagpika, kawagrii.
"If you like, go and have a look.

Mas mana trabajangapa pudirkanichu.
I could not have worked harder.

Piru kunauramanda, achka piunkunawami, mailla sukalankangichi.
But from this day on, with a whole group of workers you will clear only a small piece.

Mana mirapunkangichitachu.
You will not see the product of your labor.

Mana baliuraka, nukamanda askurintimi, iuiarinakunkangichi.
When it is too late, you will really be thinking of me."

Chasa rimaspaka, kanchamasi llugsirka.
And speaking like that, he went out to the patio, they say.

VII (The party)

Chikama, piunkuna askurintisi, aswa upiai apanakú.
From there the field workers were drinking large quantities, they say, of maize beer.

Mas unaipika, ajaisi bumba, laugta, bututu, rundadur, taru uiachii, kallarirkakuna.
And after a while, sure enough, they say, they began to play drum, flute, cow horn, panpipes, and rattles.

Nispa, bailaisi, askurinti kallarirkakuna.
After that they began to dance a lot, they say.

Chiuraka, diltudu sacha kanchallapisi, kuskungu wakanga iachá:
And at that time, an owl hooted from the tree that is closest to the patio:

"Kukukú, kukukú, kukukú, nispa waká."
Saying "hoo hoo, hoo hoo, hoo hoo," it cried.

Chasa uiaspaka, sugkuna askurintisi, mancharirkakuna.
And hearing that, some of them became very frightened, they say.

Ataitiku, ¿tapiapashi ka?
"Oh my God, could that be a bad sign?"

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Chiuraka, wasi duiñu nirkasi:
And at that time the owner of the house said, they say:

Ama mancharinakuichi.
"Don't be frightened.

Kaipi, kada chisimi chasa, uianchi.
Here every afternoon we hear this.

Ñami iacharidu kanchi.
We are used to it.

Kai ruku sacha ladullapimi, kaugsanchi.
We live just beside the forest.

Nispami, achka kuskungukuna tiankuna, i kada tutami, chasa wakagsamunkuna.
Because of that there are many owls, and they come to hoot every night."

Unaipika, paipa warmi tukunga kajka, llugsirkasi, kanchama, chi musuta kawangapa.
After a good while, his future wife went out, they say, to the patio to look for the young man.

Chiuraka, sug purutu waskapisi, tiakurka.
And at that time he was sitting on the vine of a large bean plant.

Chasa kawaspaka, alá, alá, nirkasi:
And seeing that, "Hello, darling," she said, they say:

Ama chasa llakispa tiakui. ¡Iaikumui! ¡Samui!
"Do not be sitting there so sad, come inside, come!

Aswa upiagrisunchi.
Let's go drink some maize beer.

Ama llakirikui, nukapa mamaka chasami ka.
Do not be sad, my mother is just like that.

Iangami iachá piñanga.
She gets angry without any cause."

Chasa ingañaspasi, chi musuta ukuma iaikuchirka.
Consoling the young fellow in that way, she had him enter the house.

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Ukuma iaikuspaka, kuchu bangishallapisi, tiarirka.
And entering the house, he sat way down at the end of a long bench, they say.

Nisaka, allimandasi, aswa upiai kallarirka.
Later he began, slowly, they say, to drink maize beer.

Unaipika, askurintisi, bailangapa atarirkakuna.
After a while they got up to do quite a lot of dancing, they say.

Chi musutapasi, bailangapasi, atarichinakurka.
And that young fellow, too, they were getting him up for dancing, they say.

Chika, askurintisi, piñarirka i mana bailarka.
But that one became very angry, they say, and did not dance.

Mas ima burlarispa ninakugpi imapasi, manasi, bailarka.
Even when, making fun of him, they said many things, he did not dance, they say.

VIII (The perfect field)

Ikuti kaiandika, amsamsasi, atarirkakuna, ruku sachama ringapa.
And the next day, they say, they rose before dawn to go out to the forest.

Paipa suigra tukungapa kajka, nirkasi:
His future mother-in-law said to him, they say:

> Alá, chituku mana killawangu musitujimi,
> "Hello, poor young fellow, you are not that lazy,
>
> utka dunabis atarii.
> arise quickly now.
>
> Akushi ruku sachama, mas sukalangapa.
> Let's go to the forest to clear some more land."

Chiuraka, chi musuka killai killaisi, atarirka.
And at that time the young man arose, so lazy, so lazy.

Aswa kunuchinakunkamaka, iakumasi, rirka
While they were warming the maize beer, he went down to the creek, they say,

ñawi maillaringapa, i kuchillu apilangapa.
to wash his face and sharpen his machete.

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Aswa kunurigllapisi, kaiarkakuna upiangapa.
As soon as the maize beer was warm, they say, they called him to drink some.

Aswa manara allilla tukuchigllapi, suigra tukupungapa kajka, nirkasi:
Before he finished drinking the maize beer, his future mother-in-law said, they say:

> Diusmanda, kai rakacha malkikuna saparupi jundachispa, apapuai.
> "Please, these arracacha seeds, placing them in a basket, carry them for me.
>
> Munanimi maillapasi tugsichingapa, kunapuncha.
> I want to plant some today, even if only a little."

Nispaka, parlu parlusi, ruku sachamu rirkakuna.
Later they went into the forest, talking, talking, they say.

Chima chaiagriuraka, muskuipisinasi, kawarirka.
When they arrived there, she saw it as in a dream, they say.

Iapa askurinti suma chagrasi, kawarirka.
You could see a very fine field, they say.

Askurinti iaku chugllu, sugmaka ña sarasu, sugmaka ñasi sara tustaiaku.
Many cobs of tender corn, over here cobs partly dried, over there corn that is drying.

Piru ñipisi, mana iacharka imasamanda, chasa kagta.
But nobody knew how it came to be that way.

Piunkunata tapuuraka, paikunapasi tuntiadusi, tapuchirinakú:
When she asked the field workers, they too were surprised, asking among themselves:

> ¿Imataka pasarirka? ninakunsi.
> "What happened?" they were saying.

Chiuraka, ñipisi, mana imapasi ainí, ñi musu ñi piunkuna.
And at that time nobody, they say, said a word, neither the young fellow nor the field workers.

Tuntiadullasi, paipura chapanakú parijuma.
Astounded, they say, they looked from one to the other.

IX (The unmasking)

Chi musupa suigra tukungapa kajka, piunkunata, nirkasi:

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That young man's future mother-in-law said, they say, to the field workers:

Nigpika diusmanda, kailadu trabajapuagriichi.
"So, now please, go and work for me over on this side."

Chi musuta, nirkasi:
To the young man she said:

Kamka diusmanda, rakacha malki tarpuchipuai.
"And you, please plant these arracacha seeds for me.

Nuka mailla chugllu bidagrisa, kai saparupi, kunan chisi aswangapa.
I will go harvest some of the corncobs, in this basket, to make maize beer this afternoon.

Piru utka tugsichipuangi.
But do the planting quickly."

Chasa mandaspaka, ña sutipa chugllu bidangapa, rirka.
Ordering him in this way, then truly she went to harvest the corncobs.

Chugllu bidaspa, chaiauraka,
When she arrived from harvesting the corn,

chi musuka manimasi, ñi sug mata tarpuska, karka.
the young man had not planted, they say, even a single plant.

Ianga iskai pusu utkui kallariskallasi, kawagrirka.
She came to see he had just begun to make two holes to plant the seeds.

Limpu uma chapullasi, karka.
He was there with his hair, they say, all messed up.

Chasa kawaspaka, nirkasi:
Seeing that, she said, they say:

Mana nikuni, kam animal iapa killawangumi kangi.
"Don't I say it, you are such a lazybones.

Rakacha aswa upiangapakari, askurintimi tuntiadu kawakungi.
To drink the fermented juice of the arracacha, yes sir, you are looking like crazy.

Tarpungapakari, uma aspiriillami saiakungi animal, mana apinga.

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But as for planting it, you just scratch your head, you are standing there, without shame.

Limpu uma chapulla, ñi imaura, uma mana ñagcharingichu.
Your hair is completely messed up, you never comb your hair.

¿Kuskungupashi kangi?
Would you be an owl?"

Chasa nigllapika, chituku suma chagra kaska,
And just when she said that, the field that was so fine,

aska atun ruku sachasi tukurka.
it turned into a deep forest, they say.

Chiuraka, chi musuka, kuskungu tukuspaka, sug sachama bulaspa,
And at that time the young man turning into an owl, flying to a tree,

kukukú, kukukú, kukukú nispa, rirka.
crying "Hoo hoo, hoo hoo, hoo hoo," he left.

X (The elders tell it)

Atunkuna parlankunami:
The elders talk about it:

Kuskungu runasi, kanga iacharka, aska atun chagraiuj.
The owl was a man, they say, with a very large planted field.

Sug kapariillawasi, intiru chagra ruraspa, sakidur karka.
With just one shout, they say, he could leave a whole field planted.

Rastrugiai, dismuntai u ima rurangapa tiaskasi, ruraspa sakidur karka.
The first planting, the clearing, whatever needed doing, he left it done.

Paris kapariuraka, tarpuspasi, iacharka sakinga.
When he shouted a second time, he left it planted, they say.

Kimsama kapariika, ña chugllu tukugsamunga.
When he shouted a third time, then it turned into corncobs.

Ña chusku kapariimaka, sara pallaspa sakinga.
And when he shouted a fourth time, he left the corn harvested.

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Chiwanka, ari iuiariichi, ¿imasami kaugsantranchi,
Because of that, imagine how we would live,

kunankama kuskungu runa kagpi?
if the owl were still a person?

XI (The pardon)

Taita waugkikuna, kai mana iapa suma parlu kajpi, imapasi pasinsia iukawaichi,
Dear brothers, please forgive me for this imperfect story,

kai parlitu, nukatapasi parlawaskallatami ka.
this little story, is just the way they told it to me.

Notes

1. The young fellows around me started using this term for anyone who made an exceptional shot in marbles.

2. This Kamsá rendering of the Inga is very close to accurate. In correct Inga, this sentence could read as follows: nuka singa-lla-lla-mi pinga-wa-ku. I have added the affirmative evidentiary marker –mi, and switched the final syllable to the continuative marker –ku. The root is *pingai* meaning "to feel shame" and it is followed by the first-person object affix, -wa. *Singa* is "nose" and it is followed by two statements of the delimitative affix –lla. *Nuka* is "I."

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